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situated 600 ft. above sea-level, on the river Vardar, and on the Salonica-Mitrovitza railway, 25 m. S.E. of Uskub. Pop. (1905), about 22,000. Koprüli has a flourishing trade in silk; maize and mulberries are cultivated in the neighbourhood. The Greek and Bulgarian names of the town may be corrupt forms of the ancient Bylazora, described by Polybius as the chief city of Paonia.

KORA, or CORA, an ancient town of Northern India, in the Fatehpur district of the United Provinces. Pop. (1901), 2806. As the capital of a Mahomedan province, it gave its name to part of the tract (with Allahabad) granted by Lord Clive to the titular Mogul emperor, Shah Alam, in 1765.

KORAN. The Koran (Kor'án) is the sacred Book of Islam, on which the religion of more than two hundred millions of Mahomedans is founded, being regarded by them as the immediate word of God. And since the use of the Koran in public worship, in schools and otherwise, is much more extensive than, for example, the reading of the Bible in most Christian countries, it has been truly described as the most widely-read book in existence. This circumstance alone is sufficient to give it an urgent claim on our attention, whether it suit our taste and fall in with our religious and philosophical views or not. Besides, it is the work of Mahomet, and as such is fitted to afford a clue to the spiritual development of that most successful of all prophets and religious personalities. It must be owned that the first perusal leaves on a European an impression of chaotic confusion—not that the book is so very extensive, for it is not quite as large as the New Testament. This impression can in some degree be modified only by the application of a critical analysis with the assistance of Arabian tradition.

To the faith of the Moslems, as has been said, the Koran is the word of God, and such also is the claim which the book itself advances. For except in sur. i.—which is a prayer for men—and some few passages where Mahomet (vi. 104, 114; xxvii. 93; xlii. 8) or the angels (xix. 65; xxxvii. 164 sqq.) speak in the first person without the intervention of the usual imperative “say” (sing. or pl.), the speaker throughout is God, either in the first person singular or more commonly the plural of majesty “we.” The same mode of address is familiar to us from the prophets of the Old Testament; the human personality disappears, in the moment of inspiration, behind the God by whom it is filled. But all the greatest of the Hebrew prophets fall back speedily upon the unassuming human “I”; while in the Koran the divine “I” is the stereotyped form of address. Mahomet, however, really felt *Mahomet's* himself to be the instrument of God; this *consciousness* was no doubt brighter at his first appearance than it afterwards became, but it never entirely forsook him. Nevertheless we cannot doubt his good-faith, not even in the cases in which the moral quality of his actions leaves most to be desired. In spite of all, the dominant fact remains, that to the end he was zealous for his God and for the salvation of his people, nay, of the whole of humanity, and that he never lost the unconquerable certainty of his divine mission.

The rationale of revelation is explained in the Koran itself as follows: In heaven is the original text (“the mother of the book,” xliii. 3; “a concealed book,” lv. 77; “a well-guarded tablet,” lxxxv. 22). By the process of “sending down” (*tanzil*), one piece after another was communicated to the Prophet. The mediator was an angel, who is called sometimes the “Spirit” (xxvi. 193), sometimes the “holy Spirit” (xvi. 104), and at a later time “Gabriel” (only in ii. 91, 92; lxvi. 4). This angel dictates the revelation to the Prophet, who repeats it after him, and afterwards proclaims it to the world (lxxxvii. 6, &c.). It is plain that we have here a somewhat crude attempt of the Prophet to represent to himself the more or less unconscious process by which his ideas arose and gradually took shape in his mind. It is no wonder if in such confused imagery the details are not always self-consistent. When, for example, this heavenly archetype is said to be in the hands of “exalted scribes” (lxxx. 13 sqq.), this seems a transition to a quite different set of ideas, namely, the books of fate, or the record of all human actions—conceptions

which are actually found in the Koran. It is to be observed, at all events, that Mahomet's transcendental idea of God, as a Being exalted altogether above the world, excludes the thought of direct intercourse between the Prophet and God.

It is an explicit statement of the Koran that the sacred book was revealed (“sent down”) by God, not all at once, but piecemeal and gradually (xxv. 34). This is evident *Component* from the actual composition of the book, and is *Parts of the* confirmed by Moslem tradition. That is to say, *Koran.* Mahomet issued his revelations in fly-leaves of greater or less extent. A single piece of this kind was called either, like the entire collection, *kor'án*, i.e. “recitation,” “reading,” or, better still, is the equivalent of Aramaic *geryānā* “lectionary”; or *kitāb*, “writing”; or *sūra*, which is perhaps the late-Hebrew *shūrā*, and means literally “series.” The last became, in the lifetime of Mahomet, the regular designation of the individual sections as distinguished from the whole collection; and accordingly it is the name given to the separate chapters of the existing Koran. These chapters are of very unequal length. Since many of the shorter ones are undoubtedly complete in themselves, it is natural to assume that the longer, which are sometimes very comprehensive, have arisen from the amalgamation of various originally distinct revelations. This supposition is favoured by the numerous traditions which give us the circumstances under which this or that short piece, now incorporated in a larger section, was revealed; and also by the fact that the connexion of thought in the present *sūras* often seems to be interrupted. And in reality many pieces of the long *sūras* have to be severed out as originally independent; even in the short ones parts are often found which cannot have been there at first. At the same time we must beware of carrying this sifting operation too far,—as Nöldeke now believes himself to have done in his earlier works, and as Sprenger also sometimes seems to do. That some *sūras* were of considerable length from the first is seen, for example, from xii., which contains a short introduction, then the history of Joseph, and then a few concluding observations, and is therefore perfectly homogeneous. In like manner, xx., which is mainly occupied with the history of Moses, forms a complete whole. The same is true of xviii., which at first sight seems to fall into several pieces; the history of the seven sleepers, the grotesque narrative about Moses, and that about Alexander “the Horned,” are all connected together, and the same rhyme through the whole *sūra*. Even in the separate narrations we may observe how readily the Koran passes from one subject to another, how little care is taken to express all the transitions of thought, and how frequently clauses are omitted, which are almost indispensable. We are not at liberty, therefore, in every case where the connexion in the Koran is obscure, to say that it is really broken, and set it down as the clumsy patchwork of a later hand. Even in the old Arabic poetry such abrupt transitions are of very frequent occurrence. It is not uncommon for the Koran, after a new subject has been entered on, to return gradually or suddenly to the former theme,—a proof that there at least separation is not to be thought of. In short, however imperfectly the Koran may have been redacted, in the majority of cases the present *sūras* are identical with the originals.

How these revelations actually arose in Mahomet's mind is a question which it is almost as idle to discuss as it would be to analyse the workings of the mind of a poet. In his early career, sometimes perhaps in its later stages also, many revelations must have burst from him in uncontrollable excitement, so that he could not possibly regard them otherwise than as divine inspirations. We must bear in mind that he was no cold systematic thinker, but an Oriental visionary, brought up in crass superstition, and without intellectual discipline; a man whose nervous temperament had been powerfully worked on by ascetic austerities, and who was all the more irritated by the opposition he encountered, because he had little of the heroic in his nature. Filled with his religious ideas and visions, he might well fancy he heard the angel bidding him recite what was said to him. There may have been many a revelation of this kind which no one ever heard but himself, as he repeated it to himself in the silence

of the night (lxxiii. 4). Indeed the Koran itself admits that he forgot some revelations (lxxxvii. 7). But by far the greatest part of the book is undoubtedly the result of deliberation, touched more or less with emotion, and animated by a certain rhetorical rather than poetical glow. Many passages are based upon purely intellectual reflection. It is said that Mahomet occasionally uttered such a passage immediately after one of those epileptic fits which not only his followers, but (for a time at least) he himself also, regarded as tokens of intercourse with the higher powers. If that is the case, it is impossible to say whether the trick was in the utterance of the revelation or in the fit itself.

How the various pieces of the Koran took literary form is uncertain. Mahomet himself, so far as we can discover, never wrote down anything. The question whether he could read and write has been much debated among Moslems, unfortunately more with dogmatic arguments and spurious traditions than authentic proofs.

The Koran Written.

At present one is inclined to say that he was not altogether ignorant of these arts, but that from want of practice he found it convenient to employ some one else whenever he had anything to write. After the migration to Medina (A.D. 622) we are told that short pieces—chiefly legal decisions—were taken down immediately after they were revealed, by an adherent whom he summoned for the purpose; so that nothing stood in the way of their publication. Hence it is probable that in Mecca, where the art of writing was commoner than in Medina, he had already begun to have his oracles committed to writing. That even long portions of the Koran existed in written form from an early date may be pretty safely inferred from various indications; especially from the fact that in Mecca the Prophet had caused insertions to be made, and pieces to be erased in his previous revelations. For we cannot suppose that he knew the longer sūras by heart so perfectly that he was able after a time to lay his finger upon any particular passage. In some instances, indeed, he may have relied too much on his memory. For example, he seems to have occasionally dictated the same sūra to different persons in slightly different terms. In such cases, no doubt, he may have partly intended to introduce improvements; and so long as the difference was merely in expression, without affecting the sense, it could occasion no perplexity to his followers. None of them had literary pedantry enough to question the consistency of the divine revelation on that ground. In particular instances, however, the difference of reading was too important to be overlooked. Thus the Koran itself confesses that the unbelievers cast it up as a reproach to the Prophet that God sometimes substituted one verse for another (xvi. 103). On one occasion, when a dispute arose between two of his own followers as to the true reading of a passage which both had received from the Prophet himself, Mahomet is said to have explained that the Koran was revealed in seven forms. In this apparently genuine dictum seven stands, of course, as in many other cases, for an indefinite but limited number. But one may imagine what a world of trouble it has cost the Moslem theologians to explain the saying in accordance with their dogmatic beliefs. A great number of explanations are current, some of which claim the authority of the Prophet himself; as, indeed, fictitious utterances of Mahomet play throughout a conspicuous part in the exegesis of the Koran. One very favourite, but utterly untenable interpretation is that the "seven forms," are seven different Arabic dialects.

When such discrepancies came to the cognizance of Mahomet it was doubtless his desire that only one of the conflicting texts should be considered authentic; only he never gave himself much trouble to have his wish carried into effect. Although in theory he was an upholder of verbal inspiration, he did not push the doctrine to its extreme consequences; his practical good sense did not take these things so strictly as the theologians of later centuries. Sometimes, however, he did suppress whole sections or verses, enjoining his followers to efface or forget them, and declaring them to be "abrogated." A very remarkable case is that of the two verses in liii., when he had recognized three heathen goddesses as exalted beings, possessing influence with God. This had occurred

in a moment of weakness, in order that by such a promise, which yet left Allah in his lofty position, he might gain over his fellow-countrymen. This object he achieved, but soon his conscience smote him, and he declared these words to have been an inspiration of Satan.

So much for abrogated readings; the case is somewhat different when we come to the abrogation of laws and directions to the Moslems, which often occurs in the Koran. There is nothing in this at variance with Mahomet's idea of God. God is to him an absolute despot, who declares a thing right or wrong from no inherent necessity but by his arbitrary fiat. This God varies his commands at pleasure, prescribes one law for the Christians, another for the Jews, and a third for the Moslems; nay, he even changes his instructions to the Moslems when it pleases him. Thus, for example, the Koran contains very different directions, suited to varying circumstances, as to the treatment which idolaters are to receive at the hands of believers. But Mahomet showed no anxiety to have these superseded enactments destroyed. Believers could be in no uncertainty as to which of two contradictory passages remained in force; and they might still find edification in that which had become obsolete. That later generations might not so easily distinguish the "abrogated" from the "abrogating" did not occur to Mahomet, whose vision, naturally enough, seldom extended to the future of his religious community. Current events were invariably kept in view in the revelations. In Medina it called forth the admiration of the Faithful to observe how often God gave them the answer to a question whose settlement was urgently required at the moment. The same naïveté appears in a remark of the Caliph Othman about a doubtful case: "If the Apostle of God were still alive, methinks there had been a Koran passage revealed on this point." Not unfrequently the divine word was found to coincide with the advice which Mahomet had received from his most intimate disciples. "Omar was many a time of a certain opinion," says one tradition, "and the Koran was then revealed accordingly."

The contents of the different parts of the Koran are extremely varied. Many passages consist of theological or moral reflections. We are reminded of the greatness, the goodness, the righteousness of God as manifested in Nature, in history, and in revelation through the prophets, especially through Mahomet. God is magnified as the One, the All-powerful. Idolatry and all deification of created beings, such as the worship of Christ as the Son of God, are unsparingly condemned. The joys of heaven and the pains of hell are depicted in vivid sensuous imagery, as is also the terror of the whole creation at the advent of the last day and the judgment of the world. Believers receive general moral instruction, as well as directions for special circumstances. The lukewarm are rebuked, the enemies threatened with terrible punishment, both temporal and eternal. To the sceptical the truth of Islam is held forth; and a certain, not very cogent, method of demonstration predominates. In many passages the sacred book falls into a diffuse preaching style, others seem more like proclamations or general orders. A great number contain ceremonial or civil laws, or even special commands to individuals down to such matters as the regulation of Mahomet's harem. In not a few definite questions are answered which had actually been propounded to the Prophet by believers or infidels. Mahomet himself, too, repeatedly receives direct injunctions, and does not escape an occasional rebuke. One sūra (i.) is a prayer, two (cxiii. cxiv.) are magical formulas. Many sūras treat of a single topic, others embrace several.

From the mass of material comprised in the Koran—and the account we have given is far from exhaustive—we should select the histories of the ancient prophets and saints as possessing a peculiar interest. The purpose of Mahomet is to show from these histories how God in former times had rewarded the righteous and punished their enemies. For the most part the old prophets only serve to introduce a little variety in point of form, for they are almost in every case facsimiles of Mahomet himself. They preach exactly like

Abrogated Laws.

Contents of the Koran.

Narratives.

him, they have to bring the very same charges against their opponents, who on their part behave exactly as the unbelieving inhabitants of Mecca. The Koran even goes so far as to make Noah contend against the worship of certain false gods, mentioned by name, who were worshipped by the Arabs of Mahomet's time. In an address which is put in the mouth of Abraham (xxvi. 75 sqq.), the reader quite forgets that it is Abraham, and not Mahomet (or God himself), who is speaking. Other narratives are intended rather for amusement, although they are always well seasoned with edifying phrases. It is no wonder that the godless Korishites thought these stories of the Koran not nearly so entertaining as those of Rostam and Ispandîr, related by Naḍr the son of Hārith, who had learned in the course of his trade journeys on the Euphrates the heroic mythology of the Persians. But the Prophet was so exasperated by this rivalry that when Naḍr fell into his power after the battle of Badr, he caused him to be executed; although in all other cases he readily pardoned his fellow-countrymen.

These histories are chiefly about Scripture characters, especially those of the Old Testament. But the deviations from the Biblical narratives are very marked. Many of the alterations are found in the legendary anecdotes of the Jewish Haggada and the New Testament Apocrypha; but many more are due perhaps to misconceptions such as only a listener (not the reader of a book) could fall into. One would suppose that the most ignorant Jew could never have mistaken Haman, the minister of Ahasuerus, for the minister of Pharaoh, as happens in the Koran, or identified Miriam, the sister of Moses, with Mary (= Mariām), the mother of Christ. So long, however, as we have no closer acquaintance with Arab Judaism and Christianity, we must always reckon with the possibility that many of these mistakes were due to adherents of these religions who were his authorities, or were a naïve reproduction of versions already widely accepted by his contemporaries. In addition to his misconceptions there are sundry capricious alterations, some of them very grotesque, due to Mahomet himself. For instance, in his ignorance of everything out of Arabia, he makes the fertility of Egypt—where rain is almost never seen and never missed—depend on rain instead of the inundations of the Nile (xii. 49).

It is uncertain whether his account of Alexander was borrowed from Jews or Christians, since the romance of Alexander belonged to the stereotyped literature of that age. The description of Alexander as "the Horned" in the Koran is, however, in accordance with the result of recent researches, to be traced to a Syrian legend dating from A.D. 514–515 (Th. Nöldeke, "Beiträge zur Gesch. des Alexanderromanes" in *Denkschriften Akad. Wien*, vol. xxxviii. No. 5, p. 27, &c.). According to this, God caused horns to grow on Alexander's head to enable him to overthrow all things. This detail of the legend is ultimately traceable, as Hottinger long ago supposed, to the numerous coins on which Alexander is represented with the ram's horns of Ammon.¹ Besides Jewish and Christian histories there are a few about old Arabian prophets. In these he seems to have handled his materials even more freely than in the others.

The opinion has already been expressed that Mahomet did not make use of written sources. Coincidences and divergences alike can always be accounted for by oral communications from Jews who knew a little and Christians who knew next to nothing. Even in the rare passages where we can trace direct resemblances to the text of the Old Testament (cf. xxi. 105 with Ps. xxxvii. 29; i. 5 with Ps. xxvii. 11) or the New (cf. vii. 48 with Luke xvi. 24; xlv. 19 with Luke xvi. 25), there is nothing more than might readily have been picked up in conversation with any Jew or Christian. In Medina, where he had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with Jews of some culture, he learned some things out of the Mishna, e.g. v. 35 corresponds almost word for

word with Mishna *Sanhedrin* iv. 5; compare also ii. 183 with Mishna *Berak'hoth* i. 2. That these are only cases of oral communication will be admitted by any one with the slightest knowledge of the circumstances. Otherwise we might even conclude that Mahomet had studied the Talmud; e.g. the regulation as to ablution by rubbing with sand, where water cannot be obtained (iv. 46), corresponds to a talmudic ordinance (*Berak'hoth* 15 a). Of Christianity he can have been able to learn very little, even in Medina; as may be seen from the absurd travesty of the institution of the Eucharist in v. 112 sqq. For the rest, it is highly improbable that before the Koran any real literary production—anything that could be strictly called a book—existed in the Arabic language.

In point of style and artistic effect, the different parts of the Koran are of very unequal value. An unprejudiced and critical reader will certainly find very few passages where his aesthetic susceptibilities are thoroughly satisfied. But he will often be struck, especially in the older pieces, by a wild force of passion, and a vigorous, if not rich, imagination. Descriptions of heaven and hell, and allusions to God's working in Nature, not unfrequently show a certain amount of poetic power. In other places also the style is sometimes lively and impressive; though it is rarely indeed that we come across such strains of touching simplicity as in the middle of xciii. The greater part of the Koran is decidedly prosaic; much of it indeed is stiff in style. Of course, with such a variety of material, we cannot expect every part to be equally vivacious, or imaginative, or poetic. A decree about the right of inheritance, or a point of ritual, must necessarily be expressed in prose, if it is to be intelligible. No one complains of the civil laws in Exodus or the sacrificial ritual in Leviticus, because they want the fire of Isaiah or the tenderness of Deuteronomy. But Mahomet's mistake consists in persistent and slavish adherence to the semi-poetic form which he had at first adopted in accordance with his own taste and that of his hearers. For instance, he employs rhyme in dealing with the most prosaic subjects, and thus produces the disagreeable effect of incongruity between style and matter. It has to be considered, however, that many of those sermonizing pieces which are so tedious to us, especially when we read two or three in succession (perhaps in a very inadequate translation), must have had a quite different effect when recited under the burning sky and on the barren soil of Mecca. There, thoughts about God's greatness and man's duty, which are familiar to us from childhood, were all new to the hearers—it is hearers we have to think of in the first instance, not readers—to whom, at the same time, every allusion had a meaning which often escapes our notice. When Mahomet spoke of the goodness of the Lord in creating the clouds, and bringing them across the cheerless desert, and pouring them out on the earth to restore its rich vegetation, that must have been a picture of thrilling interest to the Arabs, who are accustomed to see from three to five years elapse before a copious shower comes to clothe the wilderness once more with luxuriant pastures. It requires an effort for us, under our clouded skies, to realize in some degree the intensity of that impression.

The fact that scraps of poetical phraseology are specially numerous in the earlier sūras, enables us to understand why the prosaic mercantile community of Mecca regarded Mahomet's eccentric townsman as a "poet," or even a "Form and Rhyme" poet. Mahomet himself had to disclaim such titles, because he felt himself to be a divinely inspired prophet; but we too, from our standpoint, shall fully acquit him of poetic genius. Like many other predominantly religious characters, he had no appreciation of poetic beauty; and if we may believe one anecdote related of him, at a time when every one made verses, he affected ignorance of the most elementary rules of prosody. Hence the style of the Koran is not poetical but rhetorical; and the powerful effect which some portions produce on us is gained by rhetorical means. Accordingly the sacred book has not even the artistic form of poetry; which, among the Arabs, includes a stringent metre, as well as rhyme. The Koran is never metrical, and only a few exceptionally

¹ Reproductions of such Ptolemaic and Lysimachan coins are to be found in J. J. Bernouilli, *Die erhaltenen Darstellungen Alexanders d. Gr.* (Munich, 1905), Tab. VIII.; also in Theodor Schreiber, "Studien über das Bildniss Alexanders des Gr." in the *Abh. Sachs. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, Bd. xxi. (1903), Tab. XIII.

eloquent portions fall into a sort of spontaneous rhythm. / On the other hand, the rhyme is regularly maintained; although, especially in the later pieces, after a very slovenly fashion. Rhymed prose was a favourite form of composition among the Arabs of that day, and Mahomet adopted it; but if it imparts a certain sprightliness to some passages, it proves on the whole a burdensome yoke. The Moslems themselves have observed that the tyranny of the rhyme often makes itself apparent in derangement of the order of words, and in the choice of verbal forms which would not otherwise have been employed; e.g. an imperfect instead of a perfect. In one place, to save the rhyme, he calls Mount Sinai *Sinīn* (xcv. 2) instead of *Sinā* (xxiii. 20); in another Elijah is called *Ilyāsīn* (xxxvii. 130) instead of *Ilyās* (vi. 85; xxxvii. 123). The substance even is modified to suit exigencies of rhyme. Thus the Prophet would scarcely have fixed on the unusual number of eight angels round the throne of God (lxix. 17) if the word *thamāniyah*, "eight," had not happened to fall in so well with the rhyme. And when lv. speaks of two heavenly gardens, each with two fountains and two kinds of fruit, and again of two similar gardens, all this is simply because the dual termination (*ān*) corresponds to the syllable that controls the rhyme in that whole sūra. In the later pieces, Mahomet often inserts edifying remarks, entirely out of keeping with the context, merely to complete his rhyme. In Arabic it is such an easy thing to accumulate masses of words with the same termination, that the gross negligence of the rhyme in the Koran is doubly remarkable. One may say that this is another mark of the Prophet's want of mental training, and incapacity for introspective criticism.

On the whole, while many parts of the Koran undoubtedly have considerable rhetorical power, even over an unbelieving reader, the book, aesthetically considered, is by no means a first-rate performance. To begin with what we are most competent to criticize, let us look at some of the more extended narratives. It has already been noticed how vehement and abrupt they are where they ought to be characterized by epic repose. Indispensable links, both in expression and in the sequence of events, are often omitted, so that to understand these histories is sometimes far easier for us than for those who heard them first, because we know most of them from better sources. Along with this, there is a great deal of superfluous verbiage; and nowhere do we find a steady advance in the narration. Contrast in these respects the history of Joseph (xii.) and its glaring improprieties with the admirably conceived and admirably executed story in Genesis. Similar faults are found in the non-narrative portions of the Koran. The connexion of ideas is extremely loose, and even the syntax betrays great awkwardness. Anacolutha are of frequent occurrence, and cannot be explained as conscious literary devices. Many sentences begin with a "when" or "on the day when" which seems to hover in the air, so that the commentators are driven to supply a "think of this" or some such ellipsis. Again, there is no great literary skill evinced in the frequent and needless harping on the same words and phrases; in xviii., for example, "till that" (*hattā idhā*) occurs no fewer than eight times. Mahomet, in short, is not in any sense a master of style. This opinion will be endorsed by any European who reads through the book with an impartial spirit and some knowledge of the language, without taking into account the tiresome effect of its endless iterations. But in the ears of every pious Moslem such a judgment will sound almost as shocking as downright atheism or polytheism. Among the Moslems, the Koran has always been looked on as the most perfect model of style and language. This feature of it is in their dogmatic the greatest of all miracles, the incontestable proof of its divine origin.

Such a view on the part of men who knew Arabic infinitely better than the most accomplished European Arabist will ever do, may well startle us. In fact, the Koran boldly challenged its opponents to produce ten sūras, or even a single one, like those of the sacred book, and they never did so. That, to be sure, on calm reflection, is not so very surprising. Revelations of the kind which Mahomet uttered, no unbeliever could

produce without making himself a laughing-stock. However little real originality there is in Mahomet's doctrines, as against his own countrymen he was thoroughly original, even in the form of his oracles. To compose such revelations at will was beyond the power of the most expert literary artist; it would have required either a prophet or a shameless impostor. And if such a character appeared after Mahomet, still he could never be anything but an imitator, like the false prophets who arose about the time of his death and afterwards. That the adversaries should produce any sample whatsoever of poetry or rhetoric equal to the Koran is not at all what the Prophet demands. In that case he would have been put to shame, even in the eyes of many of his own followers, by the first poem that came to hand. Nevertheless, it is on a false interpretation of this challenge that the dogma of the incomparable excellence of the style and diction of the Koran is based. The rest has been accomplished by dogmatic prejudice, which is quite capable of working other miracles besides turning a defective literary production into an unrivalled masterpiece in the eyes of believers. This view once accepted, the next step was to find everywhere evidence of the perfection of the style and language. And if here and there, as one can scarcely doubt, there was among the old Moslems a lover of poetry who had his difficulties about this dogma, he had to beware of uttering an opinion which might have cost him his head. We know of at least one rationalistic theologian who defined the dogma in such a way that we can see he did not believe it (Shahrastānī, p. 39). The truth is, it would have been a miracle indeed if the style of the Koran had been perfect. For although there was at that time a recognized poetical style, already degenerating to mannerism, a developed prose style did not exist. All beginnings are difficult; and it can never be esteemed a serious charge against Mahomet that his book, the first prose work of a high order in the language, testifies to the awkwardness of the beginner. And further, we must always remember that entertainment and aesthetic effect were at most subsidiary objects. The great aim was persuasion and conversion; and, say what we will, that aim has been realized on the most imposing scale.

Mahomet repeatedly calls attention to the fact that the Koran is not written, like other sacred books, in a strange language, but in Arabic, and therefore is intelligible to all. At that time, along with foreign ideas, many foreign words had crept into the language; especially Aramaic terms for religious conceptions of Jewish or Christian origin. Some of these had already passed into general use, while others were confined to a more limited circle. Mahomet, who could not fully express his new ideas in the common language of his countrymen, but had frequently to find out new terms for himself, made free use of such Jewish and Christian words, as was done, though perhaps to a smaller extent, by certain thinkers and poets of that age who had more or less risen above the level of heathenism. In Mahomet's case this is the less wonderful because he was indebted to the instruction of Jews and Christians, whose Arabic—as the Koran pretty clearly intimates with regard to one of them—was very defective. On the other hand, it is yet more remarkable that several of such borrowed words in the Koran have a sense which they do not possess in the original language. It is not necessary that this phenomenon should in every case be due to the same cause. Just as the prophet often misunderstood traditional traits of the sacred history, he may, as an unlearned man, likewise have often employed foreign expressions wrongly. Other remarkable senses of words were possibly already acclimatized in the language of Arabian Jews or Christians. Thus, *forqān* means really "redemption," but Mahomet uses it for "revelation." The widespread opinion that this sense first asserted itself in reference to the Arab root *فرق* (*farāqa*), "sever," or "decide," is open to considerable doubt. There is, for instance, no difficulty in deriving the Arab meaning of "revelation" from the common Aramaic "salvation," and this transference must have taken place in a community for which salvation formed the central object of faith, i.e. either amongst those Jews who looked to the coming of a Messiah or,

Foreign Words.

Dogma of the Stylistic Weaknesses.

more probably, among Christians, since Christianity is in a very peculiar sense the religion of salvation. *Milla* is properly "word" (= Aramaic *mellihā*), but in the Koran "religion." It is actually used of the religion of the Jews and Christians (once), of the heathen (5 times), but mostly (8 times) of the religion of Abraham, which Mahomet in the Medina period places on the same level with Islam. Although of the Aramaic dialects none employs the term *Mellihā* in the sense of religion, it appears that the prophet found such a use. *Illiyūn*, which Mahomet uses of a heavenly book (Sūra 83; 18, 19), is clearly the Hebrew *elyōn*, "high" or "exalted." It is, however, doubtful in what sense this word appeared to him, either as a name of God, as in the Old Testament it often occurs and regularly without the article, or actually as the epithet of a heavenly book, although this use cannot be substantiated from Jewish literature. So again the word *mathānī* is, as Geiger has conjectured, the regular plural of the Aramaic *mathnūhā*, which is the same as the Hebrew *Mishnah*, and denotes in Jewish usage a legal decision of some of the ancient Rabbins. But in the Koran Mahomet appears to have understood it in the sense of "saying" or "sentence" (cf. xxxix. 24). On the other hand, it is by no means certain that by "the Seven Mathani" (xv. 87) the seven verses of Sūra i. are meant. Words of undoubtedly Christian origin are less frequent in the Koran. It is an interesting fact that of these a few have come over from the Abyssinian; such as *hawārīyūn* "apostles," *māida* "table," *munāfiḡ* "doubter, sceptic," *ragūn* "cursed," *mihrāb* "temple"; the first three of these make their first appearance in sūras of the Medina period. The word *shaitān* "Satan," which was likewise borrowed, at least in the first instance, from the Abyssinian, had probably been already introduced into the language. Sprenger has rightly observed that Mahomet makes a certain parade of these foreign terms, as of other peculiarly constructed expressions; in this he followed a favourite practice of contemporary poets. It is the tendency of the imperfectly educated to delight in out-of-the-way expressions, and on such minds they readily produce a remarkably solemn and mysterious impression. This was exactly the kind of effect that Mahomet desired, and to secure it he seems even to have invented a few odd vocables, as *ghislīn* (lxix. 36), *sijjīn* (lxxxiii. 7, 8), *tasnim* (lxxxiii. 27), and *salsabīl* (lxxvi. 18). But, of course, the necessity of enabling his hearers to understand ideas which they must have found sufficiently novel in themselves, imposed tolerably narrow limits on such eccentricities.

The constituents of our present Koran belong partly to the Mecca period¹ (before A.D. 622), partly to the period commencing with the migration to Medina (from the autumn of 622 to 8th June 632). Mahomet's position in Medina was entirely different from that which he had occupied in his native town. In the former he was from the first the leader of a powerful party, and gradually became the autocratic ruler of Arabia; in the latter he was only the despised preacher of a small congregation. This difference, as was to be expected, appears in the Koran. The Medina pieces, whether entire sūras or isolated passages interpolated in Meccan sūras, are accordingly pretty broadly distinct, as to their contents, from those issued in Mecca. In the great majority of cases there can be no doubt whatever whether a piece first saw the light in Mecca or in Medina; and for the most part the internal evidence is borne out by Moslem tradition. And since the revelations given in Medina frequently take notice of events about which we have fairly accurate information, and whose dates are at least approximately known, we are often in a position to fix their date with at any rate considerable certainty; here again tradition renders valuable assistance. Even with regard to the Medina passages, however, a great deal remains uncertain, partly because the allusions to historical events and circumstances are generally rather obscure, partly because traditions about the occasion of the revelation of the various pieces are often fluctuating, and often rest on misunderstanding or arbitrary conjecture. An important criterion for judging the period during which individual

¹ For the schemes of Nöldeke and Grimm see MAHOMMEDAN RELIGION.

Meccan sūras, interpolated in Medina revelations, arose (e.g. Sūr. xvi. 124, vi. 162) is provided by the Ibrāhīm legend, the great importance of which, as throwing light on the evolution of Mahomet's doctrine in its relation to older revealed religions, has been convincingly set forth by Dr Snouck Hurgronje in his dissertation for the doctor's degree and in later essays.² According to this, Ibrāhīm, after the controversy with the Jews, first of all became Mahomet's special forerunner in Medina, then the first Moslem, and finally the founder of the Ka'ba. But at all events it is far easier to arrange in some sort of chronological order the Medina sūras than those composed in Mecca. There is, indeed, one tradition which professes to furnish a chronological list of all the sūras. But not to mention that it occurs in several divergent forms, and that it takes no account of the fact that our present sūras are partly composed of pieces of different dates, it contains so many suspicious or undoubtedly false statements, that it is impossible to attach any great importance to it. Besides, it is a priori unlikely that a contemporary of Mahomet should have drawn up such a list; and if any one had made the attempt he would have found it almost impossible to obtain reliable information as to the order of the earlier Meccan sūras. We have in this list no genuine tradition, but rather the lucubrations of an undoubtedly conscientious Moslem critic, who may have lived about a century after the Flight.

Among the revelations put forth in Mecca there is a considerable number of (for the most part) short sūras, which strike every attentive reader as being the oldest. They are in an altogether different strain from many others, *The Meccan Sūras.* and in their whole composition they show least resemblance to the Medina pieces. It is no doubt conceivable—as Sprenger supposes—that Mahomet might have returned at intervals to his earlier manner; but since this group possesses a remarkable similarity of style, and since the gradual formation of a different style is on the whole an unmistakable fact, the assumption has little probability; and we shall therefore abide by the opinion that these form a distinct group. At the opposite extreme from them stands another cluster, showing quite obvious affinities with the style of the Medina sūras, which must therefore be assigned to the later part of the Prophet's work in Mecca. Between these two groups stand a number of other Meccan sūras, which in every respect mark the transition from the first period to the third. It need hardly be said that the three periods—which were first distinguished by Professor Weil—are not separated by sharp lines of division. With regard to some sūras, it may be doubtful whether they ought to be reckoned amongst the middle group, or with one or other of the extremes. And it is altogether impossible, within these groups, to establish even a probable chronological arrangement of the individual revelations. In default of clear allusions to well-known events, or events whose date can be determined, we might indeed endeavour to trace the psychological development of the Prophet by means of the Koran, and arrange its parts accordingly. But in such an undertaking one is always apt to take subjective assumptions or mere fancies for established data. Good traditions about the origin of the Meccan revelations are not very numerous. In fact the whole history of Mahomet previous to the Flight is so imperfectly related that we are not even sure in what year he appeared as a prophet. Probably it was in A.D. 610; it may have been somewhat earlier, but scarcely later. If, as one tradition says, xxx. 1 seq. ("The Romans are overcome in the nearest neighbouring land") refers to the defeat of the Byzantines by the Persians, not far from Damascus, about the spring of 614, it would follow that the third group, to which this passage belongs, covers the greater part of the Meccan period. And it is not in itself unlikely that the passionate vehemence which characterizes the first group was of short duration. Nor is the assumption contradicted by the tolerably well attested, though far from incontestable statement, that when Omar was converted (A.D. 615 or 616), xx., which belongs to the second group, already existed in writing. But the reference of xxx. 1 seq. to this particular battle is by no means so certain that positive conclusions

² See Bibliography at end.

can be drawn from it. It is the same with other allusions in the Meccan sūras to occurrences whose chronology can be partially ascertained. It is better, therefore, to rest satisfied with a merely relative determination of the order of even the three great clusters of Meccan revelations.

In the pieces of the first period the convulsive excitement of the Prophet often expresses itself with the utmost vehemence.

Oldest Meccan Sūras. He is so carried away by his emotion that he cannot choose his words; they seem rather to burst from him. Many of these pieces remind us of the oracles of the old heathen soothsayers, whose style is known to us from imitations, although we have perhaps not a single genuine specimen. Like those other oracles, the sūras of this period, which are never very long, are composed of short sentences with tolerably pure but rapidly changing rhymes. The oaths, too, with which many of them begin were largely used by the soothsayers. Some of these oaths are very uncouth and hard to understand, some of them perhaps were not meant to be understood, for indeed all sorts of strange things are met with in these chapters. Here and there Mahomet speaks of visions, and appears even to see angels before him in bodily form. There are some intensely vivid descriptions of the resurrection and the last day which must have exercised a demonic power over men who were quite unfamiliar with such pictures. Other pieces paint in glowing colours the joys of heaven and the pains of hell. However, the sūras of this period are not all so wild as these; and those which are conceived in a calmer mood appear to be the oldest. Yet, one must repeat, it is exceedingly difficult to make out any strict chronological sequence. For instance, it is by no means certain whether the beginning of xcvi. is really, what a widely circulated tradition calls it, the oldest part of the whole Koran. That tradition goes back to the Prophet's favourite wife Ayesha; but as she was not born at the time when the revelation is said to have been made, it can only contain at the best what Mahomet told her years afterwards, from his own not very clear recollection, with or without fictitious additions, and this woman is little trustworthy. Moreover, there are other pieces mentioned by others as the oldest. In any case xcvi. 1 sqq. is certainly very early. According to the traditional view, which appears to be correct, it treats of a vision in which the Prophet receives an injunction to recite a revelation conveyed to him by the angel. It is interesting to observe that here already two things are brought forward as proofs of the omnipotence and care of God: one is the creation of man out of a seminal drop—an idea to which Mahomet often recurs; the other is the then recently introduced art of writing, which the Prophet instinctively seizes on as a means of propagating his doctrines. It was only after Mahomet encountered obstinate resistance that the tone of the revelations became thoroughly passionate. In such cases he was not slow to utter terrible threats against those who ridiculed the preaching of the unity of God, of the resurrection, and of the judgment. His own uncle Abū Lahab had rudely repelled him, and in a brief special sūra (cxi.) he and his wife are consigned to hell. The sūras of this period form almost exclusively the concluding portions of the present text. One is disposed to assume, however, that they were at one time more numerous, and that many of them were lost at an early period.

Since Mahomet's strength lay in his enthusiastic and fiery imagination rather than in the wealth of ideas and clearness of abstract thought on which exact reasoning depends, it follows that the older sūras, in which the former qualities have free scope, must be more attractive to us than the later. In the sūras of the second period the imaginative glow perceptibly diminishes; there is still fire and animation, but the tone becomes gradually more prosaic. As the feverish restlessness subsides, the periods are drawn out, and the revelations as a whole become longer. The truth of the new doctrine is proved by accumulated instances of God's working in nature and in history; the objections of opponents, whether advanced in good faith or in jest, are controverted by arguments; but the demonstration is often confused or even weak. The histories of the earlier prophets, which had occasionally been briefly touched on in the first period,

are now related, sometimes at great length. On the whole, the charm of the style is passing away.

There is one piece of the Koran, belonging to the beginning of this period, if not to the close of the former, which claims particular notice. This is Sūra i., the Lord's Prayer of the Moslems, a vigorous hymn of praise to God, the Lord of both worlds, which ends in a petition for aid and true guidance (*hudā*). The words of this sūra, which is known as *al-fātiḥa* ("the opening one"), are as follows:—

(1) In the name of God, the compassionate compassioner. (2) Praise be [literally "is"] to God, the Lord of the worlds, (3) the compassionate compassioner, (4) the Sovereign of the day of judgment. (5) Thee do we worship and of Thee do we beg assistance. (6) Direct us in the right way; (7) in the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious, on whom there is no wrath, and who go not astray.

The thoughts are so simple as to need no explanation; and yet the prayer is full of meaning. It is true that there is not a single original idea of Mahomet's in it. Of the seven verses of the sūra no less than five (verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 6) have an extremely suspicious relationship with the stereotyped formulae of Jewish and Christian liturgies. Verse 6 agrees, word for word, with Ps. xxvii. 11. On the other hand, the question must remain open whether Mahomet only gave free renderings of the several borrowed formulae, or whether in actually composing them he kept existing models. The designation of God as the "Compassioner," *Rahmān*, is simply the Jewish *Rahmānā*, which was a favourite name for God in the Talmudic period. The word had long before Mahomet's time been used for God in southern Arabia (cf. e.g. the Sabaeen Inscriptions, Glaser, 554, line 32; 618, line 2).

Mahomet seems for a while to have entertained the thought of adopting *al-Rahmān* as a proper name of God, in place of *Allāh*, which was already used by the heathens.¹ This purpose he ultimately relinquished, but it is just in the sūras of the second period that the use of *Rahmān* is specially frequent. If, for this reason, it is to a certain extent certain that Sūra i. belongs to this period, yet we can neither prove that it belongs to the beginning of the Mecca period nor that the present introductory formula "In the name of God," &c., belonged to it from the first. It may therefore even be doubted whether Mahomet at the outset looked upon the latter as revealed. Tradition, of course, knows in this connexion no doubt, and looks upon the Fātiḥa precisely as the most exalted portion of the Koran. Every Moslem who says his five prayers regularly—as the most of them do—repeats it not less than twenty times a day.

The sūras of the third Meccan period, which form a fairly large part of our present Koran, are almost entirely prosaic. Some of the revelations are of considerable extent, and the single verses also are much longer than in the older sūras. Only now and then a gleam of poetic power flashes out. A sermonizing tone predominates. The sūras are very edifying for one who is already reconciled to their import, but to us at least they do not seem very well fitted to carry conviction to the minds of unbelievers. That impression, however, is not correct, for in reality the demonstrations of these longer Meccan sūras appear to have been peculiarly influential for the propagation of Islam. Mahomet's mission was not to Europeans, but to a people who, though quick-witted and receptive, were not accustomed to logical thinking, while they had outgrown their ancient religion.

When we reach the Medina period it becomes, as has been indicated, much easier to understand the revelations in their historical relations, since our knowledge of the history of

¹ Since in Arabic also the root *رَحِمَ* signifies "to have pity," the Arabs must have at once perceived the force of the new name. While the foreign word *Rahmān* is, in accordance with its origin, everywhere in the Koran to be understood as "Merciful," there is some doubt as to *Rahīm*. The close connexion of the two expressions, it is true, makes it probable that Mahomet only added the adjective *Rahīm* to the substantive *Rahmān* in order to strengthen the conception. But the genuine Arab meaning of *Rahīm* is "gracious," and thus, the old Mahomedan Arab papyri render this word by *φιλάνθρωπος*.

Mahomet in Medina is tolerably complete. In many cases the historical occasion is perfectly clear, in others we can at least recognize the general situation from which they arose, and thus approximately fix their time. There still remains, however, a remnant, of which we can only say that it belongs to Medina.

The style of this period bears a fairly close resemblance to that of the latest Meccan period. It is for the most part pure prose, enriched by occasional rhetorical embellishments. Yet even here there are many bright and impressive passages, especially in those sections which may be regarded as proclamations to the army of the faithful. For the Moslems Mahomet has many different messages. At one time it is a summons to do battle for the faith; at another, a series of reflections on recently experienced success or misfortune, or a rebuke for their weak faith; or an exhortation to virtue, and so on. He often addresses himself to the "doubters," some of whom vacillate between faith and unbelief, others make a pretence of faith, while others scarcely take the trouble even to do that. They are no consolidated party, but to Mahomet they are all equally vexatious, because, as soon as danger has to be encountered, or a contribution is levied, they all alike fall away. There are frequent outbursts, ever increasing in bitterness, against the Jews, who were very numerous in Medina and its neighbourhood when Mahomet arrived. He has much less to say against the Christians, with whom he never came closely in contact; and as for the idolaters, there was little occasion in Medina to have many words with them. A part of the Medina pieces consists of formal laws belonging to the ceremonial, civil and criminal codes; or directions about certain temporary complications. The most objectionable parts of the whole Koran are those which treat of Mahomet's relations with women. The laws and regulations were generally very concise revelations, but most of them have been amalgamated with other pieces of similar or dissimilar import, and are now found in very long sūras.

Such is an imperfect sketch of the composition and the internal history of the Koran, but it is probably sufficient to show that the book is a very heterogeneous collection. If only those passages had been preserved which had a permanent value for the theology, the ethics, or the jurisprudence of the Moslems, a few fragments would have been amply sufficient. Fortunately for knowledge, respect for the sacredness of the letter has led to the collection of all the revelations that could possibly be collected—the "abrogating" along with the "abrogated," passages referring to passing circumstances as well as those of lasting importance. Every one who takes up the book in the proper religious frame of mind, like most of the Moslems, reads pieces directed against long-obsolete absurd customs of Mecca just as devoutly as the weightiest moral precepts—perhaps even more devoutly, because he does not understand them so well.

At the head of twenty-nine of the sūras stand certain initial letters, from which no clear sense can be obtained. Thus, before

ii. iii. xxxi. xxxii. we find **الم** (*Alif Lām Mīm*), before xl.-xlv. **ح** (*Hā Mīm*). Nöldeke at one time suggested

that these initials did not belong to Mahomet's text, but might be the monograms of possessors of codices, which, through negligence on the part of the editors, were incorporated in the final form of the Koran; he now deems it more probable that they are to be traced to the Prophet himself, as Sprenger, Loth and others suppose. One cannot indeed admit the truth of Loth's statement that in the proper opening words of these sūras we may generally find an allusion to the accompanying initials; but it can scarcely be accidental that the first verse of the great majority of them (in iii. it is the second verse) contains the word "book," "revelation," or some equivalent. They usually begin with: "This is the book," or "Revelation ('down sending') of the book," or something similar. Of sūras which commence in this way only a few (xviii. xxiv. xxv. xxxix.) want the initials, while only xxix. and xxx. have the initials and begin differently. These few exceptions may easily have proceeded from ancient corruptions; at all events they cannot neutralize the evidence of the greater number. Mahomet seems to have meant these letters for a mystic reference to the archetypal text in heaven. To a man who regarded the art of writing, of which at the best he had but a slight knowledge, as something supernatural, and who lived amongst illiterate people, an A B C may well have seemed more

significant than to us who have been initiated into the mysteries of this art from our childhood. The Prophet himself can hardly have attached any particular meaning to these symbols: they served their purpose if they conveyed an impression of solemnity and enigmatical obscurity. In fact, the Koran admits that it contains many things which neither can be, nor were intended to be, understood (iii. 5). To regard these letters as ciphers is a precarious hypothesis, for the simple reason that cryptography is not to be looked for in the very infancy of Arabic writing. If they are actually ciphers, the multiplicity of possible explanations at once precludes the hope of a plausible interpretation. None of the efforts in this direction, whether by Moslem scholars or by Europeans, has led to convincing results. This remark applies even to the ingenious conjecture of Sprenger, that the letters **كهيعص** (*Kāf Hē Yē Ain Sād*) before xix. (which treats of John and Jesus, and, according to tradition, was sent to the Christian king of Abyssinia) stand for *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum*. Sprenger arrives at this explanation by a very artificial method; and besides, Mahomet was not so simple as the Moslem traditionalists, who imagined that the Abyssinians could read a piece of the Arabic Koran. It need hardly be said that the Moslems have from old applied themselves with great assiduity to the decipherment of these initials, and have sometimes found the deepest mysteries in them. Generally, however, they are content with the prudent conclusion that God alone knows the meaning of these letters.

It is probable (see above) that Mahomet had already caused revelations to be written down at Mecca, and that this began from the moment when he felt certain that he was the transmitter of the actual text of a heavenly book to mankind. It is even true that he may at some time or another have formed the intention of collecting these revelations. The idea of a heavenly model would in itself have suggested such a course and, only in an inferior degree to this, the necessity of setting a new and uncorrupted document of the divine will over against the sacred scriptures of the Jews and Christians, the people of the Book, as the Koran calls them. In any case, when Mahomet died, the separate pieces of the Koran, notwithstanding their theoretical sacredness, existed only in scattered copies; they were consequently in great danger of being partially or entirely destroyed. Many Moslems knew large portions by heart, but certainly no one knew the whole; and a merely oral propagation would have left the door open to all kinds of deliberate and inadvertent alterations. But now, after the death of the Prophet, most of the Arabs revolted against his successor, and had to be reduced to submission by force. Especially sanguinary was the struggle against the prophet Maslama (Mubarrad, *Kāmil* 443, 5), commonly known by the derisive diminutive *Mosailima*. At that time (A.D. 633) many of the most devoted Moslems fell, the very men who knew most Koran pieces by heart. Omar then began to fear that the Koran might be entirely forgotten, and he induced the Caliph Abū Bekr to undertake the collection of all its parts. The Caliph laid the duty on Zaid ibn Thābit, a native of Medina, then about twenty-two years of age, who had often acted as amanuensis to the Prophet, in whose service he is even said to have learned the Jewish letters.

The account of this collection of the Koran has reached us in several substantially identical forms, and goes back to Zaid himself. According to it, he collected the revelations from copies written on flat stones, pieces of leather, ribs of palm-leaves (not palm-leaves themselves), and such-like material, but chiefly "from the breasts of men," i.e. from their memory. From these he wrote a fair copy, which he gave to Abū Bekr, from whom it came to his successor Omar, who again bequeathed it to his daughter Hafsa, one of the widows of the Prophet. This redaction, commonly called *al-ṣoḥof* ("the leaves"), had from the first no canonical authority; and its internal arrangement can only be conjectured.

The Moslems were as far as ever from possessing a uniform text of the Koran. The bravest of their warriors sometimes knew deplorably little about it; distinction on that field they cheerfully accorded to pious men like Ibn Mas'ūd. It was inevitable, however, that discrepancies should emerge between the texts of professed scholars, and as these men in their several localities were authorities on the reading of the Koran, quarrels began to break out between the levies from different districts about the true form

of the sacred book. During a campaign in A.H. 30 (A.D. 650-651), Ḥoḍhaifa, the victor in the great and decisive battle of Nehāveand (see CALIPHATE; and PERSIA: *History*) perceived that such disputes might become dangerous, and therefore urged on the caliph Othmān the necessity for a universally binding text. The matter was entrusted to Zaid, who had made the former collection, with three leading Koreishites. These brought together as many copies as they could lay their hands on, and prepared an edition which was to be canonical for all Moslems. To prevent any further disputes, they burned all the other codices except that of Ḥaḥṣa, which, however, was soon afterwards destroyed by Merwān the governor of Medina. The destruction of the earlier codices was an irreparable loss to criticism; but, for the essentially political object of putting an end to controversies by admitting only one form of the common book of religion and of law, this measure was necessary.

The result of these labours is in our hands; as to how they were conducted we have no trustworthy information, tradition being here too much under the influence of dogmatic presuppositions. The critical methods of a modern scientific commission will not be expected of an age when the highest literary education for an Arab consisted in ability to read and write. It now appears highly probable that this second redaction took this simple form: Zaid read off from the codex which he had previously written, and his associates, simultaneously or successively, wrote one copy each to his dictation. These three manuscripts will therefore be those which the caliph, according to trustworthy tradition, sent in the first instance as standard copies to Damascus, Basra and Kufa to the warriors of the provinces of which these were the capitals, while he retained one at Medina. Be that as it may, it is impossible now to distinguish in the present form of the book what belongs to the first redaction from what is due to the second.

In the arrangement of the separate sections, a classification according to contents was impracticable because of the variety of subjects often dealt with in one sūra. A chronological arrangement was out of the question, because the chronology of the older pieces must have been imperfectly known, and because in some cases passages of different dates had been joined together. Indeed, systematic principles of this kind were altogether disregarded at that period. The pieces were accordingly arranged in indiscriminate order, the only rule observed being to place the long sūras first and the shorter towards the end, and even that was far from strictly adhered to. The two magic formulae, sūras cxiii., cxiv. owe their position at the end of the collection to their peculiar contents, which differ from all the other sūras; they are protecting spells for the faithful. Similarly it is by reason of its contents that sūra i. stands at the beginning: not only because it is in praise of Allah, as Psalm i. is in praise of the righteous man, but because it gives classical expression to important articles of the faith. These are the only special traces of design. The combination of pieces of different origin may proceed partly from the possessors of the codices from which Zaid compiled his first complete copy, partly from Zaid himself. The individual sūras are separated simply by the superscription: "In the name of God, the compassionate Compassioner," which is wanting only in the ninth. The additional headings found in our texts (the name of the sūras, the number of verses, &c.) were not in the original codices, and form no integral part of the Koran.

It is said that Othmān directed Zaid and his associates, in cases of disagreement, to follow the Koreish dialect; but, though well attested, this account can scarcely be correct. The extremely primitive writing of those days was quite incapable of rendering such minute differences as can have existed between the pronunciation of Mecca and that of Medina.

Othmān's Koran was not complete. Some passages are evidently fragmentary; and a few detached pieces are still extant which were originally parts of the Koran, although they have been omitted by Zaid. Amongst these are some which there is no reason to suppose Mahomet desired to suppress. Zaid may easily have overlooked a few stray

fragments, but that he purposely omitted anything which he believed to belong to the Koran is very unlikely. It has been conjectured that in deference to his superiors he kept out of the book the names of Mahomet's enemies, if they or their families came afterwards to be respected. But it must be remembered that it was never Mahomet's practice to refer explicitly to contemporary persons and affairs in the Koran. Only a single friend, his adopted son Zaid (xxxiii. 37), and a single enemy, his uncle Abū Lahab (cxi.)—and these for very special reasons—are mentioned by name; and the name of the latter has been left in the Koran with a fearful curse annexed to it, although his son had embraced Islam before the death of Mahomet, and his descendants belonged to the noblest families. So, on the other hand, there is no single verse or clause which can be plausibly made out to be an interpolation by Zaid at the instance of Abū Bekr, Omar, or Othmān. Slight clerical errors there may have been, but the Koran of Othmān contains none but genuine elements—though sometimes in very strange order. All efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Koran have failed.

Of the four exemplars of Othmān's Koran, one was kept in Medina, and one was sent to each of the three metropolitan cities, Kufa, Basra, and Damascus. It can still be pretty clearly shown in detail that these four codices deviated from one another in points of orthography, in the insertion or omission of a *wa* ("and") and such-like minutiae; but these variations nowhere affect the sense. All later manuscripts are derived from these four originals.

At the same time, the other forms of the Koran did not at once become extinct. In particular we have some information about the codex of Ubay ibn Ka'b. If the list which gives the order of its sūras is correct, it must have contained substantially the same materials as our text; in that case Ubay ibn Ka'b must have used the original collection of Zaid. The same is true of the codex of Ibn Mas'ūd, of which we have also a catalogue. It appears that the principle of putting the longer sūras before the shorter was more consistently carried out by him than by Zaid. He omits i. and the magical formulae of cxiii., cxiv. Ubay, on the other hand, had embodied two additional short prayers, which we may regard as Mahomet's. One can easily understand that differences of opinion may have existed as to whether and how far formularies of this kind belonged to the Koran. Some of the divergent readings of both these texts have been preserved as well as a considerable number of other ancient variants. Most of them are decidedly inferior to the received readings, but some are quite as good, and a few deserve preference.

The only man who appears to have seriously opposed the general introduction of Othmān's text is Ibn Mas'ūd. He was one of the oldest disciples of the Prophet, and had often rendered him personal service; but he was a man of contracted views, although he is one of the pillars of Moslem theology. His opposition had no effect. Now when we consider that at that time there were many Moslems who had heard the Koran from the mouth of the Prophet, that other measures of the imbecile Othmān met with the most vehement resistance on the part of the bigoted champions of the faith, that these were still further incited against him by some of his ambitious old comrades until at last they murdered him, and finally that in the civil wars after his death the several parties were glad of any pretext for branding their opponents as infidels;—when we consider all this, we must regard it as a strong testimony in favour of Othmān's Koran that no party found fault with his conduct in this matter, or repudiated the text formed by Zaid, who was one of the most devoted adherents of Othmān and his family, and that even among the Shiites criticism of the caliph's action is only met with as a rare exception.

But this redaction is not the close of the textual history of the Koran. The ancient Arabic alphabet was very imperfect; it not only wanted marks for the short and in part even for the long vowels, but it often expressed several consonants by the same sign, e.g. one and the same character could mean B, T, Th at the beginning and N and J (I) in the middle of words. Hence there were

Other Editions.

Ibn Mas'ūd.

many words which could be read in very different ways. This variety of possible readings was at first very great, and many readers seem to have actually made it their object to discover pronunciations which were new, provided they were at all appropriate to the ambiguous text. There was also a dialectic licence in grammatical forms, which had not as yet been greatly restricted. An effort was made by many to establish a more refined pronunciation for the Koran than was usual in common life or in secular literature. The various schools of "readers" differed very widely from one another; although for the most part there was no important divergence as to the sense of words. A few of them gradually rose to special authority, and the rest disappeared. Seven readers are generally reckoned chief authorities, but for practical purposes this number was continually reduced in process of time; so that at present only two "reading-styles" are in actual use,—the common style of Hafs, and that of Nāfi; which prevails in Africa to the west of Egypt. There is, however, a very comprehensive massoretic literature in which a number of other styles are indicated. The invention of vowel-signs of diacritic points to distinguish similarly formed consonants, and of other orthographic signs, soon put a stop to arbitrary conjectures on the part of the readers. Many zealots objected to the introduction of these innovations in the sacred text, but theological consistency had to yield to practical necessity. In accurate codices, indeed, all such additions, as well as the titles of the sūra, &c., are written in coloured ink, while the black characters profess to represent exactly the original of Othmān. But there is probably no copy quite faithful in this respect. Moreover, the right recitation of the Koran is an art which even people of Arab tongue can only learn with great difficulty. In addition to the nuances of pronunciation already alluded to, there is a semi-musical modulation. In these matters also the various schools differ.

In European libraries, besides innumerable modern manuscripts of the Koran, there are also codices, or fragments, of high antiquity, some of them probably dating from the 1st century of the Flight. For the restoration of the text, however, the works of ancient scholars on its readings and modes of writing are more important than the manuscripts; which, however elegantly they may be written and ornamented, proceed from irresponsible copyists. The original, written by Othmān himself, has indeed been exhibited in various parts of the Mahomedan world. The library of the India Office contains one such manuscript, bearing the subscription: "Written by 'Othmān the son of 'Affān." These, of course, are barefaced forgeries, although of very ancient date; so are those which profess to be from the hand of 'Alī, one of which is preserved in the same library. In recent times the Koran has been often printed and lithographed, both in the East and the West. In Mahomedan countries lithography alone is employed.

Shortly after Mahomet's death certain individuals applied themselves to the exposition of the Koran. Much of it was obscure from the beginning, other sections were unintelligible apart from a knowledge of the circumstances of their origin. Unfortunately, those who took possession of this field were not very honourable. Ibn 'Abbās, a cousin of Mahomet, and the chief source of the traditional exegesis of the Koran, has, on theological and other grounds, given currency to a number of falsehoods; and at least some of his pupils have emulated his example. These earliest expositions dealt more with the sense and connexion of whole verses than with the separate words. Afterwards, as the knowledge of the old language declined, and the study of philology arose, more attention began to be paid to the explanation of vocables. A good many fragments of this older theological and philological exegesis have survived from the first two centuries of the Flight, although we have no complete commentary of this period. The great commentary of Ṭabari, A.D. 839-923, of which for the last few years we have possessed an Oriental edition in 30 parts (Cairo A.H. 1321 = A.D. 1903), is very full when it comes to speak of canonical law, as well as in its accounts of the occasions of the several revelations; for, as in his great historical work, he faithfully records a large number of traditions with the channels by which they have come down to us (genealogical trees, *isnād*). In other respects the hopes based upon this commentary have not been fulfilled.

Another very famous commentary is that of Zamakhsharī (A.D. 1075-1144), edited by Nassau-Lees, Calcutta, 1859; but this scholar, with his great insight and still greater subtlety, is too apt to read his own scholastic ideas into the Koran. The favourite commentary of Baiḍāwī (d. A.D. 1286), edited by Fleischer (Leipzig, 1846-1848), is little more than an abridgment of Zamakhsharī's. Thousands of commentaries on the Koran, some of them of prodigious size, have been written by Moslems; and even the number of those still extant in manuscript is by no means small. Although these works all contain much that is useless or false, yet they are invaluable aids to our understanding of the sacred book. An unbiased European can, no doubt, see many things at a glance more clearly than a good Moslem who is under the influence of religious prejudice; but we should still be helpless without the exegetical literature of the Mahomedans. Even the Arabian Moslems would only understand the Koran very dimly and imperfectly if they did not give special attention to the study of its interpretation. The advantage of being in a language commonly understood, which the holy book claims for

itself, has vanished in the course of thirteen centuries. According to the dominant view, however, the ritual use of the Koran is not in the least concerned with the sacred words being understood, but solely with their being quite properly recited. Nevertheless, a great deal remains to be accomplished by European scholarship for the correct interpretation of the Koran. We want, for example, an exhaustive classification and discussion of all the Jewish elements in the Koran; a praiseworthy beginning was made in Geiger's youthful essay *Was hat Mohamed aus dem Judenthum aufgenommen?* (Bonn, 1833; the "second revised edition," Leipzig, 1902, is only a reprint). We want especially a thorough commentary, executed with the methods and resources of modern science. No European language, it would seem, can even boast of a translation which completely satisfies modern requirements. The best are in English; where we have the extremely paraphrastic, but for its time admirable translation of George Sale (repeatedly printed), that of Rodwell (1861), which seeks to give the pieces in chronological order, and that of Palmer (1880), who wisely follows the traditional arrangements. The introduction which accompanies Palmer's translation is not in all respects abreast of the most recent scholarship. Considerable extracts from the Koran are well translated in E. W. Lane's *Selections from the Kur-ān*. Not much can be said in praise of the complete translations into the German language, neither of that of Ullmann, which has appeared in several editions, nor of that of Henning (Leipzig) and Grigull (Halle), all of them shallow amateurs who have no notion of the difficulties to be met with in the task, and are almost entirely dependent on Sale. Friedrich Rückert's excellent version (published by August Müller, Frankfurt-on-Maine, 1888) gives only selections. M. Klamroth's translation of the fifty oldest sūras, *Die fünfzig ältesten Suren* (Hamburg, 1890) attempts successfully to reproduce the rhymed form of the originals. The publication of the translation of the Koran by the great Leipzig Arabic scholar, H. L. Fleischer (d. 1888) has so far unfortunately been delayed. (For modern editions, commentaries, &c., see MAHOMMEDAN RELIGION: *Bibliography*).

Besides commentaries on the whole Koran, or on special parts and topics, the Moslems possess a whole literature bearing on their sacred book. There are works on the spelling and right pronunciation of the Koran, works on the beauty of its language, on the number of its verses, words and letters, &c.; nay, there are even works which would nowadays be called "historical and critical introductions." Moreover, the origin of Arabic philology is intimately connected with the recitation and exegesis of the Koran. To exhibit the importance of the sacred book for the whole mental life of the Moslems would be simply to write the history of that life itself; for there is no department in which its all-pervading, but unfortunately not always salutary, influence has not been felt.

The unbounded reverence of the Moslems for the Koran reaches its climax in the dogma that this book, as the divine word, *i.e.* thought, is immanent in God, and consequently *eternal* and *uncreated*. This dogma, which was doubtless due to the influence of the Christian doctrine of the eternal Word of God, has been accepted by almost all Mahomedans since the beginning of the 3rd century. Some theologians did indeed protest against it with great energy; it was in fact too preposterous to declare that a book composed of unstable words and letters, and full of variants, was absolutely divine. But what were the distinctions and sophisms of the theologians for, if they could not remove such contradictions, and convict their opponents of heresy?

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(Th. N.; Fr. Sy.)

KORAT, the capital of the provincial division (*Monton*) of Nakawn Racha Sema, or "the frontier country," in Siam; in 102° 5' E., 14° 59' N. Pop. about 7000, mixed Cambodian and Siamese. It is the headquarters of a high commissioner and of an army division. It is the terminus of a railway from Bangkok, 170 m. distant, and the distributing centre for the whole of the plateau district which forms the eastern part of Siam. There are copper mines of reputed wealth in the neighbourhood. It is the centre of a silk-growing district and is the headquarters of the government sericultural department, instituted in 1904 with the assistance of Japanese experts for the purpose of improving the quality of Siamese silk. The government is that of an ordinary provincial division of Siam. A French vice-consul resides here. Since the founding of Ayuthia in the 14th century,